



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

THE DEFINITION OF THE SUPERNATURAL

GEORGE T. KNIGHT

TUFTS COLLEGE

With the ultimate purpose of helping to clarify thought on the subject of the supernatural, the present essay is a study of usage mostly in Christian history and particularly of today. It therefore notes the meanings which seem to be assigned to the word and to its synonyms and associates; and it includes some criticism of usage, according to the accepted laws of thought, such as may contribute to the purpose of clarification.

The literature of the subject contains three chief meanings of the words "nature" and "supernatural," which may be indicated as follows.

Under the first of these views, the supernatural is God the Creator, together with his immediate acts and whatever else has immediate relations with him, such as heaven, his home. Hence nature includes "the whole of created things after they have left the hand of God," especially if connected with matter. In this classification, angels, demons, and discarnate human spirits are not always considered, but, if considered, they are usually classed as supernatural. The meaning thus varies from its smallest content, God alone, to its largest, all beings, superhuman or superearthly. This is the every-day usage among people of ordinary intelligence and generally among their superiors. For convenience these meanings of our two chief words may be designated as nature¹ and supernatural¹.

Secondly, nature is so regarded as to include all being whatever. Such is the implication when we speak of the "nature of God," or say every being has a nature. So wrote Scotus Erigena, "Nature in its broadest sense includes all things created and uncreated"; and Nietzsche says, "Miracles belong to a higher order of things which is a nature also"; and, according to Ruskin, "A human act may be super-doggish, and a divine act super-human, yet both of them are absolutely natural"; and very

lately Professor W. A. Brown of Union Theological Seminary and Professor Stearns of Bangor write, "A miracle is the most natural of all events." Pantheists and other parties have favored this notion quite as much as those who hold chairs in orthodox seminaries. Schelling declared that "nature . . . the creation . . . is not the mere phenomenon and revelation of the Eternal, but is rather the very Eternal itself; and, as Spinoza says, the more we discover the individual things, the more we discover God." We may characterize the movement of thought on this line as an alternating current; the pantheists have reversed the thought and regarded everything as really supernatural, the so-called natural being only an illusion. When, however, the current is direct, it implies that there is no supernatural. With such a meaning Theodore Parker shocked many good people of Boston by saying, "God is the most natural being in the world," and "every [event] is natural because it is true, it is a fact." And many have said that miracles are natural to Christianity.

Thus, following the varying usages of words, one man may say that there is a supernatural, and another that there is no supernatural; and both are right—according to the meanings assigned to nature. This second usage we mark nature^2 and supernatural^2 ; but (except with pantheists) $\text{supernatural}^2 = 0$.

Thirdly, in a large number of expressions nature really means the region of necessity, and supernatural therefore the region of free wills both divine and human, though most writers omit the human. This meaning is perhaps more often found implied than fully intended and purposed; yet, on the whole, it is so often used as to require attention. Bushnell and others have seen in man's free will a creative power, and have therefore regarded human free will as supernatural. A. H. Strong¹ says, "Nature is the manifestation of God under the law of cause and effect. Mind is the manifestation of God under the law of freedom." Observe also that physics is committed to this distinction (except for theism) when it defines cause as the transfer of energy or of $\frac{mv^2}{2}$. For any event that happens outside the circle of mass and velocity may then be called supernatural. And, even so, Huxley

¹Christ in Creation, pp. 55-56; compare Frazer, Philosophy of Theism, 1st Series, pp. 248-275.

and others have declared thought to be a miracle. Kant, Deussen, and Dorner² have called morality supernatural. Professor Hudson said, "It cannot be too often asserted that what we call the order of nature is not ethical at all: the laws of nature as such have nothing to do with morality." Matthew Arnold similarly wrote, "Man must begin, know this, where nature ends." J. S. Mill³, if I rightly understand, him recognized nature² and nature³, saying: "Nature has two chief meanings: it either denotes the entire system of things, with the aggregate of all their properties, or it denotes things as they would be apart from human intervention."

In the literature relating to miracles the word "law" is found to be used mostly in the several meanings following:—

1. Arbitrary appointments, human or divine: statute-law.
2. Moral law, not arbitrary, originating not in God's will but in his being or nature, of which his will is an expression.
3. The constituent principles of anything, as in the sentence, "God will act according to the laws of his being."
4. Great scientific generalizations, such as: "The law of gravity is that all matter attracts all other matter directly as the mass and inversely as the square of the distance."
5. Any commonly observed or supposed order in which things occur is called a law. This is the favorite meaning of the scientists, and is often declared to be the only proper meaning. "Physical laws are not compulsory, they rule nothing, they are but statements of our more or less uniform experience."
6. Necessary order: "A mathematical law is a law not only because it is always found to be true, but because its untruth would be impossible."
7. The total of all order, past, present, and to come, observed and unobserved.
8. A force or cause operating regularly. This is the meaning most commonly used, though it is often condemned by those who attempt to be accurate as a gross abuse and as a sign of an unscientific mind—if so, however, one might remark, nearly all the scientists are unscientific.

²System of Ethics, p. 59.

³Three Essays, p. 64.

Several other shades of meaning have been observed or must be inferred as a device for making a statement mean something; but the above seem to include all that we need to notice.

When a man so writes that several of these meanings may apply at the same time without confusion, he may perhaps be entitled to so many as his language may include and yet be true. There are, however, many unconscious attempts to combine several meanings which result in confusion more or less mischievous. Thus where we talk about "laws observed by the lower animals," the mental picture implied is of statute laws (law 1), whereas the objective fact is merely the way in which animals are seen to act (law 5). Similar confusions are in such expressions as: "the laws regulating the growth and decay of vegetation," and "the laws determining the movements of inanimate bodies or masses"—unless indeed those be regarded as instances of law 8.

More serious confusion arises when in the processes of reasoning, a premise is affirmed which is true in one meaning of law, and an inference is drawn which is legitimate only as from another meaning. Something like this seems to be in one of the common arguments for the existence of God. It is said that "if there are laws of nature, there must be a law-giver, that is God." This would be good reasoning if "law of nature" meant such a law as is found in Blackstone. It is true that statute-law is proof of the existence of a law-maker; but such is not the ordinary meaning of the law of nature. It is only in a metaphor that we say "the laws of God are written all over his works." If we speak literally and understand law in its most approved scientific sense (say law 5) the conclusion cannot be confidently drawn. The later teleology does not reason merely from an observed order that there is a personal author of the order. When, however, the order is moral, or seems to have been directed or interfered with in such a way as to benefit mankind, then we apprehend signs of intelligent handling or personal direction, and accordingly we infer a personal author.

In a few writers no distinction is observed among things supernatural; but generally, since the early centuries of Christianity, miracles have been distinguished from magic, in that the former

were done by God and his agents, and the latter by the devils. Loisy's distinction may, however, be preferred. He sees in miracles the socially approved, and in magic the socially disapproved. When therefore, we may infer, St. Hilarion gave a Christian jockey some holy water by means of which he won a horse-race, the question whether the result was a miracle or magic may be decided by vote.

Another distinction almost as ancient as the preceding, and not less important, recognizes the difference between subjective miracles and objective miracles. This distinction has not been uniformly observed; for many are found who speak or write as if the objective miracle were the only kind known to the church. Thus when the Protestants decided that miracles had ceased from the time when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire, or again that they ceased when the last apostle died, they meant the objective miracles only; for they have always held to subjective miracles, such as conversion and the ordinary operation of the Holy Spirit when he works within the soul. Nor did they mean all kinds of the objective; for example, prayers for rain and for victory in war are still offered up, and are supposed to be answered objectively.

The growth of intelligence has in three ways reduced the number and changed the quality of miracles believed in. First, mankind have assumed (whether rightly or wrongly, need not be discussed) that whatever is found to occur regularly, especially if it have a physical antecedent or means, is not a miracle. Familiarity is a great enemy of the miracle. We no longer ask, as St. Augustine asked significantly, "Who gave chaff such power to freeze that it preserves snow that has been buried under it, and such power to warm that it ripens green fruit?" "Who can explain the strange properties of fire which, though bright itself, blackens everything it burns?" and so on.

A second example is the decay of belief in the devil and his works, on account of which change we have mostly ceased to believe in magic and witchcraft, that most terrible part of the history of human cruelty. Today we have so far outgrown that kind of thing, that we read with suspicion that until about three hundred years ago all classes of people believed in witchcraft,

—popes, literary men, and reformers, ritualists and puritans, old world and new world; Thomas Aquinas, the greatest mind in the church, Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris, Bossuet, Erasmus, Luther, Calvin, Beza, John Wesley, Cotton Mather, one of the presidents of Harvard College, Coke, Bacon, Shakspeare—though it is fair to say that some of these were far less credulous than others.

A third cause of the decline of the sense of the supernatural, or of the miracle-habit, is the discrediting of ancient humbugs, accompanied by the accrediting of only a smaller number of new ones. We make jest of Marco Polo's circumstantial account of a mountain in Asia which a Christian "having faith as a grain of mustard seed" had removed to another place by prayer, "by which miracle many Saracens became Christians." It may be well to recall that this miracle occurred before Marco Polo arrived at the place. Reports of eye-witnesses, however, are to be had of many miracles. Sir John Mandeville is apparently responsible for the statement that "iron will float in the Dead Sea and feathers will sink; which he would not have believed had he not seen it." And that witches changed themselves into cats is often affirmed. Lecky quotes a report that one man succeeded in cutting off the leg of a cat that attacked him, and that the leg immediately turned into that of an old woman, and four witnesses signed a certificate attesting the fact.

Miracles were in such a number that "a mere catalogue of those done by Thomas à Becket fills thirteen octavo pages." All this was not among Catholics only. The kings of England, whatever their relations to religion, were very potent against epilepsy and scrofula. Charles II had such virtue that he touched effectively nearly one hundred thousand people. This practice extended to the time of William III, who himself regarded the whole thing as a superstition, and on one occasion, consenting to lay his hand on a patient, said, "God give you better health and more sense." To which Whiston adds that "the patient was healed in spite of William's incredulity."

Those who speak of miracles, whether as friend or foe of the supernatural, commonly use the same defining and describing terms, and a great number of them.

1. The miracle is usually thought of as an act of God in violation of natural law, and as such it breaks, transgresses, opposes, contradicts, antagonizes, contravenes, interferes with, suspends, infringes upon, the law. Some thirty or forty synonymous words and phrases are in use for this idea.

But a moment's consideration might suffice to show that violation of the law cannot distinguish the miracle, for among the forces of nature not commonly called miraculous all the forms of opposition are to be found and are indeed common occurrences. All natural events are brought about by several forces interacting and more or less counteracting. Often with the greatest violence individuals and whole orders are regardlessly swept away. It is said that a hundred times as many species have existed on earth as are now alive. Their laws (senses 3, 5, 8) have been violated, destroyed, annihilated. Violence is itself a part of the great law (sense 5) of evolution. If now violence is in nature and law, it cannot define miracle while that is thought of as the opposite of law.

Some have thought to save the miracle and law and other associated sanctities by acknowledging that miracles are more or less opposed to law or nature and are to some extent within nature as known to us, but "they are examples of laws unknown to us"—Theodore Parker said "laws unknown and unknowable." This definition, at least in Parker's form, presents the difficulty of our knowing the existence of the unknowable. And apart from Parker the definition is merely a special form of the first definition. The same conclusion must be reached with regard to any synonym, such as "unique," or any other form of opposition or exception.

2. The miracle is also thought of as not opposed to law but independent of law, transcending law, outside law, the antithesis of law. The idea may apparently be reached in this way: human thoughts and feelings are real things which have nothing to do with the law of gravity; they do not attract each other like material things, nor do they change the law of attraction between material things. Now imagine some event which is as independent of all laws as thoughts are of gravity, and that is a miracle.

One might inquire how anything so thoroughly outside nature could be known to us, for in our experience things are known by the changes they make in what would otherwise be the order of nature (law 5). At any rate this definition does not help us much in our present study, for the miracles we are interested in, those of the Bible and the church especially, are not outside nature and its order but inside. After all, this idea might be regarded as a subordinate form of opposition. He that is not for us is against us.

3. Rejecting therefore these clues as the defining characteristics, let us inquire whether the idea of direct relation with God may not serve. Miracles are often so defined. But with this there are two difficulties. For when the saints and the ritual perform miracles as the agents of God (according to the Catholic church and some Protestants), God is acting indirectly, and, secondly, we meet the same difficulty as before, for in the usual Christian theory (except deism) God has also direct relations with every event and is one of the active causes in its occurrence.

Some minds are, however, satisfied with the last statement, and accordingly declare that all events are miraculous, as a part of the doctrine of the omnipresent activity of God; and they piously repeat, "It is a mark of wisdom to see the miraculous in all nature." Schleiermacher said, "Miracle is only the religious name for event."

4. Other writers are partly satisfied. They point out, for instance, that some events must be regarded as having in them large elements of human depravity and therefore small elements of the divine; while other events are quite the reverse and are mostly divine. The first must be regarded as for the most part in opposition to God, and the second as specially God's work, or as miraculous. Ritschl said, "A miracle is any striking natural occurrence with which the special help of God is connected."

5. Or shall miracle signify special quality rather than quantity of the divine? Some incline to say that every advance in righteousness is a miracle. Deussen says, "Deeds of morality, being against the world and its laws, contradicting them in every sense, are miracles in the truest and strictest sense."

The facts, however, do not allow us to suppose that God is inter-

ested in morals only, and that miracles are limited to morals, or have no quality except the moral.

6. Accordingly, Dörner inclines to define as miraculous every advance to a higher stage, whether it be of power or knowledge or wisdom or love. Thus, when in the course of evolution there comes into being a new distinction or variation, that advance, great or small, physical or moral, is a miracle. And when it has become established and has taken a regular place among secondary things, it is no longer called miraculous.

7. While, however, it seems rationally impossible to confine miracle to any one of these several ideas, there is nothing to prevent its containing them all in a measure, as in the usage of some authorities it does. Before following this clew there is one other method of classifying the definitions which should be considered. They may be classified without much straining of terms, in two varieties corresponding to the two essential meanings of supernatural, marked above as supernatural¹ and supernatural².

I. Accordingly, the first variety of miracle may be called the *fiat miracle*. Its idea seems to have been originally borrowed from the tricks of the popular magician, who without the use of visible means pronounces some mystic formula, and instantly brings forth a marvellous result. So the people of early times thought of God as the chief magician, and so the type of his action has commonly been regarded as: "Let there be light, and there was light." This idea of the miracle has prevailed in all historic times, and still prevails with most Christians.

The fiat miracle corresponds with the usage marked nature¹ and supernatural¹, and with the idea of violation of natural law, though the milder synonyms may be often used. Many both of friends and foes of the supernatural have assumed this to be the only kind of miracle, and have on the one hand defended it as if they were defending the life of the church and religion and the last stronghold of virtue and piety; or on the other have denounced it as having no rational meaning or support, or more mildly have declared that the church and religion have, or soon will have, nothing to do with miracles or the supernatural.

II. The remaining ideas of the nature of the miracle can perhaps be brought together under the title the *immanent miracle*.

This is especially congruous with the general theory of divine immanence in the world, as the fiat miracle is with that of the divine transcendence. It is also associated with nature³ and supernatural³. And its type is the relation of our own human mind or thought among the forces of nature. Or, to be more precise in such a matter, just as our mind makes a difference in a few of the processes of matter, so the divine mind makes a difference with all processes of nature. We may therefore regard everything as a miracle, or for convenience we may call the ordinary activities of God natural, and only the extraordinary activities miraculous. In the words of Professor Bowne, "All events are more or less supernatural"; and according to A. H. Strong, "Law is God's habitual action and miracle is his unique action." This idea or theory correctly interprets the usage of history wherein the word "miracle" is (unconsciously) a relative term, like the word "hot." Everything has some heat, but only those are called hot which have an extraordinary quantity of it.

Now as to the advantages of the two theories.

I. The fiat miracle makes prominent the transcendence of God and the essential difference between God and nature. Moreover it is easily understood, being the long-established custom of speech, and popular theology being built on it. It is directly approved by the writers of the Bible, at least as commonly understood. It is also supported by many of the discoveries or theories of modern science. When, for instance, the physical scientist announces his "closed circle" of material forces, he implies (however unconsciously) that anything (like a thought or feeling of God or man) which comes in effectively from the outside, as it certainly does, must change and do violence to the order within; that is, it violates the law within the "circle." Or, more briefly, "discontinuity of mind and matter" provides for the violation of some of the laws of matter (law 5) whenever mind affects the processes of nature. Still again, the hypnotist and his kind issue orders to their patients, which are distinctly of the fiat variety, and which produce results quite as surprising as many of the miracle stories of Bible or church. A few theologians (if not many) are already claiming that hypnotism, mind-cure, and the like have so nearly duplicated all the Biblical miracles as to remove

whatever objection scientists may have had to them in our former state of ignorance as to the possibilities of psychic activities among the forces of nature.

II. The advantages of the immanent miracle theory are said to be that it is more congruous with theism (as distinct from deism), that it is the real theory of many who have advanced the former idea (miracle I); for they also have taught that God is immanent in all nature, omnipresent and always active. It presents the idea of God as friendly to nature rather than hostile to it. It was the favorite view in the early Christian church in the East. It is also Biblical, it is in 1 Corinthians, where Paul wrote an essay on inspiration (a form of the miraculous), teaching that all "gifts" are of God, and are in grades and degrees. And there is a specialty also. Is there not a specialty in Plato, as truly as in Isaiah? It is more consistent with the facts, with science and philosophy, than is the fiat miracle. For, recognizing that nature abounds in violence, it does not attempt to define miracle by the attribute of violence. Acknowledging that science has in general a right to be believed, it develops its theory in a form unobjectionable from the scientific standpoint. For, speaking both historically and logically, the objections to miracles are objections to the fiat miracle, and have little, if any, force against the immanent miracle. Indeed the latter theory seems able to save to our faith all the Biblical and other miracles that can be rationally saved.

The theory of immanent miracle is equally considerate of the powerful claims of pantheism among the great and pious of all ages. It takes its ontology and something more from pantheism, being careful however to retain personality of God as essential to Christianity.

But not only does this view of the miracle make peace with science and philosophy, it contains the promise and potency of peace among the "two and seventy warring sects" of Christianity, and even the other worthy religions. It is therefore the great missionary theory, for it alone recognizes the probability of miracles in other faiths and the inspiration of their founders and prophets. Evidence grows almost daily that only by this understanding of the subject can Christianity placate its rivals and thus enlist their best intelligence, appreciation, and affection.

Now neither the fiat theory nor the immanent theory is guaranteed by undisputed authority; and which one of them we should personally accept is mostly a matter of convenience, so long as we hold to the facts and to the laws of sound reasoning. But some may prefer (repeating definition 7 above) to generalize usage and to bring into one sentence the several ideas of miracle. We observe, then, that the word "miracle" is a relative term with a composite and variable meaning: it contains some idea of the supernatural (1 or 3), something of the thought of violating natural law (law 5, at any rate), something unique or exceptional, something of good morals or at least of advancing the divine order or purpose; and accordingly the miracle in general more nearly immediate than other events in relation to God; and these elements vary in different authors and different cases even to the extent that one may be at times unexpressed or only subconsciously intended.

The liberals and the scientists often repeat that "miracle in the sense of violation of law is simply impossible." True, when law means moral or necessary law, or all law whatsoever (law 2, 6, or 7), but not when it means law 5 or 8, which are its common meanings, scientific or popular.

It is frequently said among "advanced thinkers" that, in the phrase of one of them, "the occasional interference must go." But every stroke of lightning is an occasional interference, and every summer shower interferes with some farmer's haying, and Jesus himself was a specially great interference with the order of contemporary civilization and on an occasion which in a true sense had long been prepared for. Everything natural or supernatural interferes with something, and, if it be guided by reason, it does so on a proper occasion.

We still hear and read a well-worn protest: "God will not violate his own laws." Of course he will not violate moral and necessary laws (law 2 and 3) and some other laws, but he is violating law in its usual scientific meaning (law 5) perhaps all the time, and so are we men, if we have any initiative or originality.

How often and how confidently is it affirmed that "the church must give up miracles as it has given up witchcraft." Doubtless

it ought to give up certain extreme forms of the idea and certain partial and fragmentary conceptions, but the more moderate and large-minded ideas stand approved (if not quite proved) by science and philosophy as set forth by high authorities.

Quite as zealous are the defenders of the miracle from the charge of offending science and law. A celebrated author lately wrote: "The Creator may modify the course of events without infringing on any law. Man by new combinations of the forces of nature has changed the whole face of things, and surely the Creator must have the same power to an extent infinitely greater." Is it true that one may change the whole face of things, and infinitely more, without infringing on any law? Yet even this might be true if the meaning of law were limited to law 2, 4, 6—which it is not.

Another declares that "God reveals himself in the order of the world, and not by occasional interruptions or breaks in that order." Why not in both? Indeed there could not long remain any faith in God at all in human hearts, were not the established order occasionally changed, that some advance might be made. And among the changes observed are all sorts of violation, even to the extent of annihilation of some laws, as already said.

It is often asserted that "miracle is an event in nature without a material cause." No, every event in nature is brought about by the parallelogram of forces, and the spiritual agencies which have to do with any event may, so far as we now know, be counted in with the forces. At any rate, it does not appear that the spiritual dispenses with the natural in producing an event within nature.

A special dictum of one class of theologians is that "philosophic theism must regard divine power as the immediate source of all phenomena alike." This is true only if pantheism be true. The almost universal Christian view is that the divine power is no more than one of the immediate sources.

Every now and then a minister gets discouraged because the old ideas are being given up. A few years ago a clergyman resigned because, as he said, "there is no longer any final authority in the Scriptures as now understood, and therefore the church can no longer vouch for anything." This, he said, "destroys

the value of the church." But in these days of a larger and more accurate knowledge of the world, and of the compelling power of its rational understanding, Professor Shaler writes, "The admonitions of right-doing and the denunciations of evil conduct which come to us from the world of fact are as mandatory as any that come from the supernatural realm." And, besides, the miracle remains in some accepted definition and has in its own nature a proper relation to authority. "He that made me whole, the same said unto me, Take up thy bed and walk." Power is instinctively obeyed. Let Mrs. Eddy or Mr. Dowie be supposed to perform a miracle, and multitudes will slavishly follow them and obey their commands. Jesus found the instinct too strong at times, and was obliged to rebuke it, that men might honor gentleness and love instead. The authority of the miracle-worker may be trusted to human instinct.

A recent lecture announced: "In the future religion there will be no supernatural, . . . it must conform to natural law, . . . it must be completely natural." But grant all that the author said about the abuse of the supernatural in the past and among the ignorant of the present, there is still a supernatural, as indeed the author himself believes and teaches. Yet his quoted words are true in the meaning of supernatural² and in some extreme forms of supernatural¹. Careful definition, however, being omitted in the lecture quoted, each hearer was liable to take the word in his own meaning, to the increase of confusion, and that, too, on an occasion which in greatness of opportunity for usefulness can seldom be duplicated.

Still more recently a great preacher feels that he has outgrown the need of miracles, and while therefore he has ordinarily kept silent on the subject, he now must speak out in the interests of clear thought and "for the instruction of the young." For this purpose he publishes an eloquent book which in effect conceals the variation of definitions, and everywhere implies that the only kind of miracle is the fiat miracle. Of course he is understood by nearly all parties to be attacking the miraculous and supernatural elements in general of Christianity, whereas he means only to discount a certain special view of the subject. Thus many are unnecessarily offended and estranged, and confusion still remains, for the young and old.

Would it not be well if theologians and others would cease trying to impose their particular definitions on the world, and to judge by them the times present and future, and would recognize instead the rights of other definitions? While therefore we hold individual opinions with all due strength, let us pray that we be able to know and to rejoice in the strength of our foes, and to give them all possible aid and comfort. Has not the time now fully come for an intelligent and sympathetic co-operation, whereby a more abundant life may be given both to special opinions and to the great interests of religion in general?

At any rate, the great and good men whose words are quoted in the few pages just preceding all believe in God, and therefore in the supernatural (in the common sense of the word), and none of them intend to say that religion present or future can get along without the supernatural, in that sense. They also believe that God is at work in the world, changing its order for the better, gently if he can and violently if he must. That is to say, they believe in miracles, in accepted meanings of the word; and they never meant to deny these things, but to affirm that the supernatural and the miracle are essential to Christianity, are its very life and support, and will always be so.

On the whole, then, we may conclude that neither the words of the conservatives nor those of the liberals furnish occasion for wrath or for alarm; and that a study of usage in general contributes not only to clear ideas, but also to peace, even the peace of faith.